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# THE CLAUDIUS CASE

BY

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In his essay "The Death of Claudius or Mushrooms for Murderers" (Bot. Mus. Leafl. Harvard Univ., vol. 23, no. 3, 1972, pp. 101–123), Mr. R. Gordon Wasson made a most brilliant attempt to identify the poison by means of which the Roman Emperor Tiberius Claudius was possibly poisoned. The essay inspired us to reread some of the classical texts. In doing so we came across a number of facts which argue against Mr. Wasson's theses.

These theses can be summarized as follows: Claudius was murdered with a poison mixed by Locusta and administered to him in a single mushroom or in a dish of mushrooms. Wasson identifies this poison as *Amanita phalloides*. When this poison did not seem to work, Claudius was administered a second poison which Wasson identifies as "colocynth", i.e. *Citrullus colocynthis* (L.) Schrader.

Let us first consider the first poison. Wasson's thesis that it was *A. phalloides* is based upon these three assertions:

1. The Latin word 'boleti' in Roman times designated the same group of mushrooms which since Linnaeus' time are called '*Amanitae*'. (cf. Wasson, p. 118)

2. Wasson holds that the effects of the poison as they are described by Tacitus (. . . turbaret mentem et mor-

tem differret.", Ann., XII, 66) correspond to *A. phalloides* poisoning. (cf. Wasson, p. 120)

3. In letter 95 of the Epistulae Morales Ad Lucilium by Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Wasson sees an allusion to *A. phalloides.* (cf. Wasson, p. 121)

According to the Latin dictionaries that we consulted, 'boletus' designates an edible mushroom, 'boleti' thus designating the class of edible mushrooms. In addition, the word seems to have had a special meaning. According to Menge-Güthling 'boletus' designates an edible mushroom, especially, however, a "Champignon" or a "Kaiserschwamm". According to K.E. Georges, 'boletus' is ". . . die beste Art essbarer Pilze, der Champignon . . ." R. Klotz says the word designates ". . . eine edle Sorte essbarer Pilze, Champignon." Harpers' Latin Dictionary says: "boletus,i,m., =βωλίτης, the best kind of mushroom, . . ." Plinius, in his Naturalis Historia, mentions 'boleti'. The text reads:

> "Inter ea quae temere manduntur et boletos merito posuerim, opimi quidem hos cibi, sed immenso exemplo in crimen adductos, veneno Tiberio Claudio principi per hanc occasionem ab coniuge Agrippina dato, quo facto illa terris venenum alterum sibique ante omnes Neronem suum dedit." (Plinius, Nat. Hist., XLVI, 92, p. 358, Loeb Classical Library)

> "Among the things which it is at times dangerous to eat, I would include mushrooms; although they are rich food, they have been used in an outstanding crime, for it was on the occasion when a dish of mushrooms was served to him that a poison was administered to the Emperor Tiberius Claudius by his wife Agrippina. In doing so she bestowed upon the world and, above all, upon herself another poison—her son Nero." (Transl. by Deltgen) (1)

It is quite unlikely that Plinius speaks of poisonous mushrooms in the passage quoted above. Of these, he comes to speak only in the sentences following our quotation. This is why H. O. Lenz in his "Botanik der Griechen und Römer (chapter "Familie Schwamm-

pflanzen, Fungi") translates "boletos" with "Kaiserschwämme", i.e. *Amanita caesarea*, for it is commonly assumed that these were Claudius' favored dish. When Plinius points out that mushrooms (whatever kind he may have had in mind), though being rich and choice food, may at times be dangerous to a person's health he obviously means this in an ironical sense, which proves that, at least, he must have been a humorous character. More humorous indeed than e.g. A. Forcellinus who, with reference to the above quotation from Plinius, writes in his "Totius Latinitatis Lexicon":

"Boletus i, m., genus fungi omnium optimi, sed simul maxime periculosi, ut qui facillime venenum attrahit, ut Plin. 22, 46, 4, ostendit, uovolo, boleto."

Forcellinus recognized that Plinius had not been speaking of a poisonous mushroom. But since Plinius wrote that it is dangerous to eat them, Forcellinus concluded that they must easily "attract" poison.

The assumption that the 'boleti' of the Romans are the 'Amanitae' of today is—as we see it—not sufficiently supported by the dictionaries, according to which the word 'boleti' appears to have four meanings:

1. Mushrooms quite generally.
2. Edible mushrooms, including Amanitae as well as non-Amanitae.
3. Possibly several particularly tasty edible mushrooms.
4. The two particularly tasty mushrooms *Psalliota campestris* and *Amanita caesarea.*

Also, there is no reason to assume that 'boletus' was a special term for poisonous mushrooms. This weakens the probability that in any given context the word 'boletus' might be meant to designate *A. phalloides.*

If we can trust Tacitus, Agrippina wanted Locusta to mix a poison which was to fulfill two requirements:

first it was to cause mental derangement in Claudius and then, after some time, it was to kill him. This double effect served a double purpose. Agrippina wanted to avoid having the Emperor die during the dinner, for it would have been difficult then to suppress the rumor that he had fallen victim to a plot. This would have compromised Agrippina as well as her son Nero, whom she wanted to become the future Caesar. Moreover, it would have been hardly possible for her to get rid of so many eye-witnesses. But since the dinner was perhaps the only occasion on which she was able to administer poison to her husband, she had to use a poison which would not kill immediately, i.e. during the dinner, but when the dinner was over. However, she had to prevent Claudius from taking any measures which might save him and/or make Britannicus successor to the throne instead of Nero. Therefore, the poison had to cause mental derangement in the victim. The symptoms of mental incoherence would be relatively inconspicuous, as Claudius was known to be a strong drinker. It was not unusual for the Emperor to get drunk in the course of a dinner. The symptoms of inebriation could hardly be distinguished by uninitiated guests from those of poisoning.

It seems, however, that even for Agrippina this was not an easy task. About what happened in the course of the memorable dinner Tacitus reports:

"adeoque cuncta mox pernotuere, ut temporum illorum scriptores prodiderint infusum delectabili cibo [ <bo> leto] venenum, nec vim medicaminis statim intellectam, socordiane an Claudii vinolentia; simul soluta alvus subvenisse videbatur. igitur exterrita Agrippina et, quando ultima timebantur, spreta praesentium invidia provisam iam sibi Xenophontis medici conscientiam adhibet. ille tamquam nisus evomentis adiuvaret, pinnam rapido veneno inlitam faucibus eius demisse creditur, . . ." (Tacitus, Ann., XII, 67, 1–2, H. Fuchs, ed.) (2)

"The whole story came out soon afterwards. Contemporary writers inform us that the poison was poured into a tasty mushroom. The

effects were not noticed immediately, either because of the Emperor's natural sluggishness or because he was inebriated. It could also be observed that he evacuated his bowels. Agrippina became frightened. The worst was now to be feared. Braving all present obloquy, she called in the physician Xenophon, whose connivance she had already secured. He, it is believed, put a feather steeped into a rapid poison down the Emperor's throat as if he purposed to help him in his effort to vomit." (Trans. by Deltgen/Kauer)

Attention is drawn to Wasson's translation of this passage (cf. Wasson, p. 121). He translates "rapido veneno" as "deadly poison", which is definitely erroneous. It makes a significant difference whether Xenophon used merely some deadly poison or a rapidly acting one.

Tacitus explicitly states that the effects of the poison were not noticed immediately—either by the uninitiated guests, who were not supposed to notice them, or by the murderess herself, as we can see from her frightened reaction. This implies that the murderers, who knew the properties of the poison administered, were expecting immediate effects. In other words: since the first effect of the poison was to be mental confusion, they expected its symptoms to appear immediately, i.e. during the dinner. It does not imply that the expected symptoms actually did not appear. The text permits the conclusion that the symptoms were in fact there, but were superimposed by those of inebriation and thus could not be recognized with certainty by a non-expert in toxicology like Agrippina. There is no reason why we should assume that Locusta knew so little of poison making and/or the political situation of her time as to commit the professional blunder of mixing a poison which might cause an "evacuation of the bowels" or vomiting. She must have known that, should the plot fail, she might lose her life. We may therefore ascribe the "evacuation of the bowels" to the effects of alcohol. (3)

We have to examine now whether the pattern of action

of the poison administered to Claudius corresponds to the pattern of *A. phalloides* poisoning, paying special attention to symptoms and temporal sequence. In his article Wasson gives a short sketch of *A. phalloides* poisoning:

> ". . . its *véritable signature* . . . is the period of absolute quiescence that follows the ingestion of the mushrooms, a period that never lasts less than six hours, and usually ten or twelve, sometimes twenty or even forty or more. The victim goes about his affairs blissfully unaware that the fingers of death are entwining him. . . . Of a sudden the victim is gripped by appalling abdominal distress, followed by vomiting and diarrhoea foetida." (Wasson, p. 102)

The critical point is missing: there is no mention of mental derangement as the initial phase. On the contrary: the poisoned person feels quite normal; he is in full possession of his physical and mental capacities. When the first symptom occurs, it is not mental derangement but "abdominal distress, followed by vomiting and diarrhoea foetida".

The most exact and detailed description of *A. phalloides* poisoning is found in L. Lewin's book on poisons. He differentiates between two variants: one gastric, the other cerebral. The former begins with diarrhoea, vomiting, colic, thirst, and in most cases ends in convalescence. The latter shows the following symptoms: headache, somnolence, pain in the calves, trismus, opistothonus, contractions in the arms, spastic twisting movements of the body, tossing of the head from right to left, muscular jerking of the upper and lower left extremities, dizziness, groaning, moaning, hydrocephalic yelling, mydriasis, and amaurosis (cf. Lewin, 1929, p. 915 f.). This variant usually leads to death. Wasson's description appears to correspond to Lewin's less dangerous variant. Yet, even Lewin's cerebral variant definitely lacks the critical symptom of mental derangement as an initial phase. Moreover, it seems to be impossible to predict which type of poisoning will occur in a person. Lewin relates

the case of a family whose members all ingested *A. phalloides*. Some showed symptoms of the gastric variant, others of the cerebral, although they had eaten from the same dish of mushrooms on the same day. Subsequently some died, whereas others survived.

The temporal sequence of *A. phalloides* poisoning does not correspond to that which the murderers of Claudius seem to have expected. According to Wasson, the incubation period is 6–40 hours or more. E. Leschke mentions 10–12 hours. Greif and Braun figure 7–48 hours; Fazekas and Jakobovits 8–10 hours. Lewin considers 9–24 hours as normal. These figures suggest an incubation period with a minimum of six and a maximum of forty-eight hours before the first symptoms appear. In the case of Claudius, the conspirators expected the first symptoms to appear immediately, i.e. during the dinner, rather than six hours or even two days later. This was their only chance to make sure of the success of their effort to poison Claudius. Once the dinner was over, Claudius might be under control of their enemies again, and enemies they had at the imperial court.

In order fully to understand this we must bear in mind the relationship between Claudius and Agrippina, which had become rather precarious by then. Agrippina deceived her husband by becoming the mistress of his treasurer Pallas. Claudius probably knew of this, for Tacitus reports:

> ". . . he had remarked in his cups that it was his destiny first to endure his wives' misdeeds, and then to punish them." (Tacitus, Ann., XII, 65, trans. by M. Grant)

Narcissus, Claudius' secretary and probably the most powerful man at court, had already succeeded in eliminating Messalina because of her adultery. This man was Agrippina's avowed enemy. He was waiting only for the moment when she made another mistake—for one

she had already made when, in the presence of Claudius, she had accused Narcissus of avarice and embezzlement. But he had dared to defend himself eloquently and, in turn, attacked Agrippina. On the other hand, it seems that Narcissus' position became increasingly weaker. For example, he had tried in vain to save Domitia Lepida, whose trial was directed from behind the scenes by Agrippina. Tacitus reports that Narcissus felt increasingly unsafe and considered his fall inevitable. In this duel between Narcissus and Agrippina he who would make the first mistake would be the loser. Agrippina had the poison ready, and Narcissus is reported to have said to his closest friends:

"convictam Messalinam et Silium: pares iterum accusandi causas esse. **, si Nero imperaret; quamquam ne impudicitiam quidem nunc abesse Pallante adultero, ne quis ambigat decus pudorem corpus, cuncta regno viliora habere." (Tacitus, Ann., XII, 65, 2, H. Fuchs ed.) (4)

"Messalina and Silius had received their condemnation and there was again similar material for a similar charge . . . (Though), even now, infidelity was not far to seek, when she had committed adultery with Pallas, in order to leave no doubt that she held her dignity, her modesty, her body, her all cheaper than a throne!" (Tacitus, Ann. ibid., transl. by J. Jackson, p. 411)

These words show that Narcissus, too, was prepared to strike. In addition, security measures for the Emperor were rigid:

". . . he never attended a banquet unless with an escort of javelin-bearing Guards, and waited upon by soldiers. Before entering a sick-room he always had it carefully gone over: pillows and mattresses were prodded, and bedclothes shaken out. Later, he even required all visitors to be searched when they came to pay him a morning call, and excused no one. Indeed it was not until the end of his reign that he reluctantly gave up the practice of having women, boys, and girls pawed about during these routine examinations, and of removing the stylus-case from every caller's attendant or secretary." (Suetonius, Divus Claudius, transl. by R. Graves, p. 202)

Agrippina was in a very difficult situation. She had

to face her own liquidation if she was not able to kill Claudius in time and put her son Nero on the throne. A banquet probably offered the best chance to accomplish the task of killing the Emperor.

It was Narcissus who made the first mistake as he left Rome and went to Sinuessa, a small town a few miles north of Naples, for a cure. So he had no chance to react immediately. Yet, he could have been back in Rome within a few hours. Considering these circumstances, Agrippina had to see with her own eyes that the poison had really worked before the dinner was over, leaving the Emperor under the control of Narcissus and his faction again.

It does not seem convincing that the murderers should have chosen a poison the effects of which might at best occur after six hours, with the possibility that this period of delay might turn out to be unforeseeably longer—perhaps two days. We doubt, therefore, that the poison used was *A. phalloides.*

Our doubts grow even stronger when we turn to letter 95 of the Epistulae Morales Ad Lucilium by L.A. Seneca. From this letter, R.G. Wasson quotes a passage which, in his view, is to be understood as an allusion to the poison used to murder Claudius:

> "Di boni, quantum hominum unus venter exercet! Quid? Tu illos boletos, voluptarium venenum, nihil occulti operis iudicas facere, etiam si praesentanei non fuerunt?" (cf. Wasson, p. 121)

As we have already pointed out, there is little support for the hypothesis that 'boletus' ever designates a poisonous mushroom, whereas there is some evidence indicating that this word may designate certain tasty—or, at least, edible—mushrooms. Even the apposition "voluptarium venenum" does not justify the conclusion that Seneca was speaking of a poisonous mushroom. The translation given by Wasson is erroneous, as it reads: "a tasty poi-

son", thus missing the point. More correctly, the two words are translated as "this poison of gluttony" (O. Apelt: "dieses Gift der Wollust") or with: "the epicure's poison" as in the Loeb edition of 1953. However, proof of the adequacy of this translation is not obtained from the quoted sentence alone. The whole context in which it appears has to be taken into consideration.

The topic of gluttony and revelry is by no means limited to letter 95. It continues throughout all of the 124 letters. Seneca touches on it in almost every letter, dealing with it in detail in letters 51, 59, 60, 86, 95, 108, 119, 122, and 123. In letter 95, he starts with the question whether man can live a blissful life by just observing moral rules. This leads him to the moral rules of the ancients. Their rules were simple, as were their lives. Having no complicated vices, they also had no complicated diseases. At this point, Seneca comes to speak of the connection between medicine and nutrition:

> "Medicina quondam paucarum fuit scientia herbarum, quibus sisteretur fluens sanguis, vulnera coirent; paulatim deinde in hanc pervenit tam multiplicem varietatem. Nec est mirum tunc illam minus negotii habuisse firmis adhuc solidisque corporibus et facili cibo nec per artem voluptatemque corrupto: qui postquam coepit non ad tollendam, sed ad invitandam famem quaeri et inventae sunt mille conditurae, quibus aviditas excitaretur, quae desiderantibus alimenta erant, onera sunt plenis." (Seneca, ep. mor., XV, ep. 95, 15, A. Beltram ed.)

> "Medicine once meant acquaintance with a few herbs to staunch bleeding and bring a wound together: since then it has gradually reached its present manifold variety. That it had less to contend with in those days is not surprising: bodies were still hard, sound flesh; food was the handiest; gastronomy had not debauched it. But ever since the search for it as a means not of removing but of exciting hunger began; from the moment when untold processes of seasoning to stimulate appetite were discovered, what was once the sustenance of the hungry has become the burden of the surfeited." (Seneca, ep. mor., ep. 95, transl. by E. P. Barker, p. 144)

The senseless and excessive gluttony of his contempo-

raries was—in Seneca's eyes—the very cause of a vast number of diseases ranging from swollen nerves and vomiting of bile to "pins and needles" in the brain. Seneca's explanation:

"Ill health was simple and sprang from a simple cause: multiplication of the dishes caused multiplication of disorders." (Seneca, ep. mor., ep. 95, transl. by E. P. Barker, p. 144)

To Seneca, excessive gormandizing and gluttony are the roots of the malaise of Roman society, the ultimate cause of the physical and moral decay of his contemporaries. He complains of the school of rhetoricians and philosophers standing empty while young people crowd around the cooking pots of gormandizers. He then goes into the details of the great banquets:

"Transeo puerorum infelicium greges, quos post transacta convivia aliae cubiculi contumeliae exspectant. Transeo agmina exoletorum per nationes coloresque discripta, ut eadem omnibus levitas sit, eadem primae mensurae lanuginis, eadem species capillorum, ne quis, cui rectior est coma, crispulis misceatur. Transeo pistorum turbam, transeo ministratorum, per quos signo dato ad inferendam cenam discurritur. *Di boni, quantum hominum unus venter exercet! Quid? Tu illos boletos, voluptarium venenum, nihil occulti operis iudicas facere, etiam si praesentanei non fuerunt?* Quid? Tu illam aestivam nivem non putas callum iocineribus obducere? Quid? Illa ostrea, inertissimam carnem caeno saginatam, nihil existimas limosae gravitatis inferre? Quid? Illud sociorum garum, pretiosam malorum piscium saniem, non credis urere salsa tabe praecordia? Quid? Illa purulenta et quae tantum non ex ipso igne in os transferuntur, iudicas sine noxa in ipsis visceribus extingui?" (Seneca, ep. mor. XV, ep. 95, 24–25, A. Beltram ed.) (5)

"I won't enlarge on the shoals of unhappy young people for whom waits the further dishonour of the bed when service at the board was over. I won't linger over the companies of epicene favourites, all in each group having the same softness of skin, the same development of adolescent down, the same growth of hair, no straight locks intruding among the curly heads. I won't say much about the horde of confectioners, of serving-men who at a nod scurry all ways at once to bring the dinner in. *Good heavens, what a mess of humanity for one belly to busy! And now, do you really think those mushrooms—sensuous bane—set no veiled energies to work, even if their effects are not immediate?* Again, do you suppose your snow in summertime doesn't indurate the

liver? Those oysters too, lumps of lifeless slime-fattened tissue, do you imagine they don't leave in you some of their muddy inertia? And the renowned 'Federal Relish'—that priceless liquor exuded by an indigestible fish in its putrescence—mustn't its salt humour be like a flame in the bowels, think you? Once more, can you suppose that those decaying morsels whisked all but from fire to lip can find an innocent extinction in your very interior?" (Seneca, ep. mor., ep. 95, transl. by E. P. Barker, p. 147)

"Ich übergehe die Schar der unglücklichen Knaben, deren nach Schluss des Gelages andere Misshandlungen im Schlafgemach harren. Ich übergehe die Reihen der Schandbuben, die nach Nationen und Farben abgeteilt sind: jede Abteilung soll die nämliche Glätte, die gleiche Länge des ersten Flaumes, das gleiche Haupthaar haben; keiner mit strafferem Haar soll unter die Krausköpfe geraten. Ich übergehe den Schwarm der Bäcker und Aufwärter, die auf das gegebene Zeichen hierhin und dorthin rennen, um das Mahl aufzutragen. *Gute Götter! Wieviel Menschen setzt ein einziger Bauch in Bewegung! Wie? Glaubst du, dass jene Pilze, dieses Gift der Wollust, keine geheime Wirkung ausüben, wenn sich dieselbe auch nicht augenblicklich zeigt?* Wie? Meinst du etwa, dass jener Sommerschnee keine Verhärtung der Leber zur Folge habe? Wie? Dass jene Austern, das unverdaulichste Fleisch, mit Kot gemästet, dir keine Schleimbeschwerden bereiten werden? Wie? Jene Lake aus der Provinz, der hochgeschätzte Saft von schädlichen Fischen, glaubst du nicht, dass sie dir durch ihre faulende Flüssigkeit die Eingeweide entzünde? Und glaubst du, dass jene Eitermasse, die fast unmittelbar aus dem Feuer in den Mund gelangt, ohne Schaden in den Eingeweiden selbst ihr Grab findet?" (Ibid. transl. from O. Apelt, p. 154 f.)

Here we find the sentence quoted by Wasson in a context indicating quite clearly that mushrooms are only one of the dishes against which Seneca campaigned. To him, the victuals mentioned in the text are the non plus ultra of unnatural nutrition. The passage in which they appear is remarkably homogenous in style. All sentences have interrogative character and are linked together by the repeated rhetorical "Quid?" It must, therefore, be understood as a coherent unit. Our interpretation is corroborated by the only other passage in his letters, where Seneca mentions 'boleti':

"Inde ostreis boletisque in omnem vitam renuntiatum est: nec enim

cibi, sed oblectamenta sunt ad edendum saturos cogentia, quod gratissimum est edacibus et se ultra quam capiunt farcientibus, facile descensura, facile reditura." (Seneca, ep. mor. XVII–XVIII, ep. 108, A. Beltram, ed.)

"Hence my lifelong renunciation of oysters and mushrooms, for these are not foods but provocatives driving the sated to eat (a most engaging quality to gluttons who cram themselves beyond their capacity), and as easily up again as they are easily down." (Seneca, ep. mor., ep. 108, transl. by E. P. Barker, p. 225)

It is evident: to Seneca this kind of food, especially oysters and mushrooms, represent the height of gluttony. He, too, used to eat them but overcame this vice in time. If he calls them a poison, this is only to express his feelings of distrust and disgust for what to him is gluttony par excellence. Seneca's attitude towards mushrooms appears to bear marked traits of mycophobia.

We conclude, therefore, that the sources available to us do not support Wasson's hypothesis that Claudius was poisoned with *A. phalloides.*

Let us now turn to Wasson's second hypothesis. Could the second poison—if there were one—have been *Citrullus colocynthis* (L.) Schrader? Wasson did not develop this second thesis so elaborately as the first one, which makes it somewhat difficult to formulate his arguments precisely. The following circumstances seem to speak in favor of his thesis: Claudius' last words are said to have been "Vae me! puto concacavi me." "Woe is me! I think I have fouled myself." These words support the assumption that Claudius was suffering from severe diarrhoea shortly before he died. *C. colocynthis,* being a drasticum, may well be thought of as the cause of such severe diarrhoea. Furthermore, Wasson believes that an allusion to the poison which finally killed Claudius must be seen in the title of Seneca's satire "Apocolocyntosis". He interprets the -colocynt- between the prefix Apo- and the suffix -osis as a reference to *C. colocynthis.*

In the following, we shall examine these two points.

Only Tacitus and Suetonius report a second poisoning. In Suetonius' text, we find a hint of the possibility that the poison was administered as an enema:

> "Etiam de subsequentibus diversa fama est. Multi statim hausto veneno obmutuisse aiunt excruciatumque doloribus nocte tota defecisse prope lucem. Nonnulli inter initia consopitum deinde cibo affluente evomuisse omnia, repetitumque toxico, incertum pultine addito, cum velut exhaustum refici cibo oporteret, an immisso per clystera, ut quasi abundantia laboranti etiam hoc genere egestionis subveniretur." (Suetonius, Divus Claudius, XLIV, H. Ailloud ed., vol. 2, p. 148)

> "Reports also differ as to what followed. Many say that as soon as he swallowed the poison he became speechless, and after suffering excruciating pain all night, died just before dawn. Some say that he first fell into a stupor, then vomited up the whole contents of his overloaded stomach, and was given a second dose, perhaps in a gruel, under pretense that he must be refreshed with food after his exhaustion, or administered in an enema, as if he were suffering from a surfeit and required relief by that form of evacuation as well." (Suetonius, J. Gavorse ed., p. 236)

This passage tells us that Suetonius himself does not believe that he is relating established facts. He remains skeptically detached from his own report by explicitly stating that he is just reporting rumors and opinions. One rumor says nothing of a second poisoning: Claudius died from the first poison. The second rumor gives two variants: he was indeed administered a second poison—according to the first variant, orally in a porridge; according to the second, rectally as an enema. Whatever they say, we must discard Suetonius' rumors as representing only hearsay information to which we should not give more credit than Suetonius does himself.

In comparison, Tacitus' report sounds more reliable. The text (Ann., XII, 67) has already been quoted. Tacitus stresses that the events which happened during the memorable banquet became known in every detail later on. He refers to writers living at the time of the

murder. Tacitus, in contrast to Suetonius, is evidently convinced of the correctness of his report. In his own judgment, he does not report rumors but facts. In addition, the sequence of events, as Tacitus describes them, appears motivated and plausible. His description reads as if told by an eyewitness. Its most dramatic scene would not make any sense, unless the second poisoning were performed in the same room which served as the dining room. This is the very moment when Agrippina —in her fear that the plot might fail—intervenes personally, at the risk of arousing the suspicion of those present. And this she certainly did, for we may safely assume that there was no one in the room who did not know that Agrippina had a motive to murder her husband: she wanted to make her son Nero successor to the throne and at the same time save her own life. This situation also provides a possible explanation as to why these events—as Tacitus says—became so well known later on: it all happened in front of eyewitnesses. It seems, then, that we must consider the report given by Tacitus as more reliable than the one given by Suetonius, which means that we have to start from the fact that the second poisoning was performed in the same room which served as the dining room rather than outside of this room—e.g. in the bedroom—and that the poison was administered orally on this occasion rather than rectally, the clyster story being comparatively improbable.

We may discard as completely improbable the assertion that Xenophon possibly was in a position to extract the active principle from *C. colocynthis*, the so-called colocynthine which, according to F. A. Flückiger, was isolated for the first time by Lebourdais in 1948. This substance seems to be a glycoside. With reduced hydrochloric acid, it can be split into sugar and the so-called colocyntheïne. The lethal dose of colocynthine is, ac-

cording to Lewin, 4 grams. Ludewig and Lohs name elaterine as the active principle in *C. colocynthis*, the lethal dose being 3 grams. J. A. Kunkel does not consider the glycoside colocynthine to be the proper poison, but the colocyntheïne which is generated after reaction with hydrochloric acid in the human stomach. He gives a lethal dose of 4 grams. Application of the chemically pure poison can be excluded from further consideration. Like Dioscurides and Scribonius Largus in their prescriptions, Xenophon must have utilized the fruit pulp if he wanted to prepare an applicable poison from *C. colocynthis*. The fruit pulp contains colocynthine in a concentration of 0.6%. Fruits of *C. colocynthis* are on an average the size of an apple or an orange. From the botanical division of the pharmaceutical company Dr. Madaus & Co., Cologne, we learned that the average colocynth fruit weighs about 180–200 grams and measures about 7.5 cm. in diameter. Our estimate of the proportions in weight (fruit pulp : skin + core = 2 : 1) was confirmed by several pharmacologists as realistic. One fruit of a total weight of 200 grams thus contains approximately 133.32 grams of fruit pulp, and 0.8 grams of chemically pure colocynthine. If Xenophon intended to kill Claudius with *C. colocynthis*, he would have had to administer to him at least 4 grams of pure colocynthine. Had he wanted to be on the safe side, he would have had to administer a considerably larger amount, for Lewin reports that even 15 grams—3.5 times the lethal dose!—have at times not proved fatal. Four grams of colocynthine are contained in 666.60 grams of fruit pulp; in order to gain 15 grams, Xenophon would have had to process 2.3 kilograms of fruit pulp. Obviously he could not have smeared such a large quantity on a feather. He may have prepared a decoction or maceration, but even then he would have found it difficult to reduce this enor-

mous mass of fruit pulp to a quantity which could be smeared on a feather (6). Even if he had succeeded in reducing the fruit pulp to a paste or powder, there would still have remained a considerable amount of solid matter—certainly too much to besmear a feather with it.

More than these technical obstacles, another fact argues against the possibility that colocynth could have been administered orally: its extraordinary bitterness. Although, for example in the prescriptions of Scribonius Largus, only comparatively small quantities of the fruit pulp of colocynth are used, the extreme bitterness of the ingredient is pointed out (cf. prescription 99). Aromatics are added to mask the bitter taste of colocynth. For comparison: if we rate the denary weight at the time of Scribonius Largus at 3.4 grams (7), prescription 99 contains about 7 grams of colocynth substance, prescription 106 about 35 grams. Xenophon would have had to administer 20 times or even 66 times as much. It seems most unlikely that Xenophon was able to administer such an overdose of gall-bitter stuff orally without provoking noticeable disgust or even actual vomiting in Claudius, which in turn would have aroused more suspicion, rendering the situation even more precarious and increasing the risk of failure.

Also arguing against *C. colocynthis* is the fact that, according to Tacitus, Xenophon used a rapidly acting poison ("rapido veneno"). By this, we commonly understand a poison which kills within minutes. So far as we can see from the literature, colocynth is not such a poison. It does not kill within minutes, nor even within hours. In fact, we could not find a single case in the sources proving beyond doubt that a person had ever died from colocynth poisoning. Even in cases of severe poisoning, symptoms drag on over a period of several days. Leschke reports the case of a young woman who tried to commit

suicide with a decoction of colocynth. She is said to have drunk a large liqueur glass of the decoction and to have fallen unconscious "soon after". Symptoms persisted for five days. On the sixth day, she had recovered. Lewin reports another case: the symptoms of the poisoning lasted for two days. If we assume that colocynth is a deadly poison at all, we must conclude that, even if a colocynth poisoning leads to death, a considerable amount of time elapses between the ingestion of the poison and exitus: one or two days—as we see it.

This and the circumstance that even 15 grams of chemically pure colocynthine do not necessarily cause death must disqualify *C. colocynthis* as a suitable poison for Agrippina and Xenophon's purpose in the given situation. They needed a tasteless poison which, even if administered in minimal quantities, would kill safely and within minutes. *C. colocynthis* does not seem to fulfill these requirements.

We now come to the last point of our discussion: does the title "Apocolocyntosis" refer to *C. colocynthis*—as an in-group joke so to speak? There are two ways to answer this question: by etymology and by text analysis.

Between the prefix Απο- and the suffix *-ωσις* the crippled noun *-κολοκυντ-* has been inserted by whoever coined this artificial word. We call *-κολοκυντ-* a crippled noun, because it lacks an ending. H. Stephanus gives as the Greek equivalents to the Latin 'cucurbita'—i.e., the generic name for all cucurbitaceous plants (in German: Kürbis)—the following forms: *κολοκύνθη*, *κολοκύντη*, *κολόκυνθος*, *κολόκυντος*, *κολόκυνθα*, and *κολόκυντα*. He explains:

"Hellespontii *κολοκύντας* nominare solent *τὰς περιψερεῖς*, Rotundas cucurbitas : *σικύας* vero, *τὰς μακρὰς*, Oblongas: quas aliqui et *'Ινδικας κολοκύντας* appellant: haeque ut plurimum *ἕψονται*, illae etiam *ὀπτῶνται*."

W. Pape lists the words *κολοκύνθη* with the attic ver-

sion *κολοκύντη*, *κολόκυνθα*, and *κολόκυντα* as equivalents to "cucurbita, der runde Kürbis". Liddell and Scott list the words *κολοκύνθη* with the attic version *κολοκύντη*, *κολόκυνθα* and *κολόκυντα* as equivalents to "round gourd, Cucurbita maxima".

As equivalents to cucurbita silvestris, however, which is the name used by Scribonius Largus and Dioscurides to denote *C. colocynthis*, Stephanus gives the Greek words, *κολοκυνθίς* and *κολόκυντα*, the latter with reference to Dioscurides. Pape, with reference to Galenus, lists *κολοκυνθίς* as equivalent to "die Koloquintenpflanze und ihre Frucht". Liddell and Scott provide the most precise information, giving *κολόκυνθα ἀγρία* as standing for "colocynth, Citrullus colocynthis'" at the same time referring to Dioscurides, IV, 176. It is this passage in Dioscurides which proves that *κολόκυνθα ἀγρία* and *κολοκυνθίς* are synonymous with cucurbita silvestris.

We thus have the stem *-κολοκυν-* to which, depending upon time, dialect, and writer various endings are attached. Combined with the endings *-θα*, *-τα*, *-θη*, *-τη*, *-θος*, and *τος* it forms a variety of words, all of which are generic names for the genus of Cucurbitaceae, equivalent to the Latin 'cucurbita' and the German 'Kürbis', whereas for *C. colocynthis* there are two names, one being a combination of the stem *-κολοκυν-* with the ending *-θίς*, the other consisting of a variant of the generic name *κολόκυνθα* and the qualifying adjective *ἀγρία* = wild.

We must content ourselves with the realization that, from the crippled *-κολοκυντ-* in *'Απο-κολοκύντ-ωσις*, we cannot conclude that it refers to *C. colocynthis*, as we do not know the ending. The occurrence of a *-τ-* instead of a *-θ-* in the word would rather suggest that it is meant to refer to the generic name of Cucurbitaceae.

In our view, even the analysis of the text of the *'Αποκολοκύντωσις* does not support the assumption that

its title alludes to *C. colocynthis*. Like Wasson, we hold that the translation "Pumpkinification", respectively "Verkürbissung" is wrong. It is wrong because it superficially focuses attention on the botanical meaning of the word. If, however, Ἀποκολοκύντωσις alludes to the Greek generic name for Cucurbitaceae, every educated Roman of the time knew that the Greek word stood for the Latin 'cucurbita', which was a commonly used metaphor for 'fool' or 'madman'. This view is supported by C. F. Russo:

> "E se poniamo mente al fatto che anche presso gli antichi κολοκύνται e cucurbitae venivano dette le teste piutosto dure ed insulse, . . ." (Russo, p. 17)

Russo, in his footnote no. 28, gives proof of this, referring to the use made of the word by Greek and Latin writers. He says "*anche* presso gli antichi", for in Italian the expression "zuccone", from "zucca"—'Kürbis'—'cucurbita', is still in use today, signifying 'fool'. (8)

The title Ἀποκολοκύντωσις appears only in the work of Dio Cassius Cocceianus. The text reads:

> "*συνέθεκε μεν γαρ και ὁ Σενέκας σύγγραμμα ἀποκολοκύντωσιν αὐτὸ ὥσπερ τινὰ ἀθανάτισιν ὀνομάσας.*" (Dio Cassius, LXI, 35, 3)

> "For Seneca published a paper which he called Apocolocyntosis as if to allude with it to a person's immortality." (Transl. Deltgen/Kauer)

Russo, basing his argument mainly on this passage, does not interpret the title as "trasformazione in una zucca", but rather as "deificazione di una zucca, di uno zuccone" or "zucconeria divinizzata", which is 'idiotism deified' or 'madness deified'. He tries to find an equivalent to Apocolocyntosis in Italian:

> "Nel termine ἀποκολοκύντωσις c'è lo stesso scherzo che ricorre per Claudio in 7, 3 e 8, 3, ove al formulare *θεός* è sostituito *μωρός*, idiota (. . . ). Non disse dunque ἀποθέωσις (né poteva dirlo bene, perché nella satira non v'è un'apoteosi) ma ἀπο . . . *μώρωσις* o meglio ἀπο . . .

κολοκύντωσις, cioé non indiamento, ma in . . . diotimento: come se, per riprendere le parole di Dione Cassio, ἀποκολοκύντωσις potesse essere un sinonimo di ἀπαθανάτισις (il termine ἀποθέωσις è ignoto a Dione Cassio)." (Russo, p. 132.) (9)

The artificial word "indiotimento", in our view, fairly accurately translates Apocolocyntosis into Italian with regard to both its form and its content. Russo's interpretation of the title not only has the advantage of being philologically coherent, it is also corroborated by the analysis of the text. In the following, we have listed those passages from the Apocolocyntosis, where Claudius is either explicitly designated as a fool or madman, or where reference is made to his physical disabilities as an expression of his madness.

*Passages from the Apocolocyntosis alluding to Claudius' mental deficiencies:*

"ego scio me liberum factum, ex quo suum diem obiit ille, qui verum proverbium fecerat aut regem aut fatuum nasci oportere." (I, 1)

"I know I have been free to do as I like since the day when he died who made the proverb true: One must be born either king or fool." (A. P. Ball ed., p. 132, 1)

"nemo enim unquam illum natum putavit." (III, 2)

". . . for nobody ever made any account of his being born." (A.P. Ball ed., p. 134, 3) (10)

"haec ait et turpi convolvens stamina fuso abrupit stolidae regalia tempora vitae." (IV, 1)

"Thus having spoken she wound up the thread on his spindle neglected, breaking off the royal days of his stupid existence." A. P. Ball ed., p. 135, 4)

"haec satis animose et fortiter, nihilo minus mentis suae non est et timet μωροῦ πληγήν." (VII, 3)

"These things he said with spirit, and boldly enough. All the same, he was inwardly a good deal afraid of the madman's blow. (A.P. Ball ed., p. 141, 7)

"deus fieri vult: parum est quod templum in Britannia habet, quod hunc barbari colunt et ut deum orant μωροῦ εὐλάτου τυχεῖν?" (VIII, 3)

"He wants to become a god. Isn't he satisfied that he has a temple in Britain; that the barbarians worship him and beseech him as a god that they may find him a merciful madman?" (A. P. Ball ed., p. 142f., 8)

*Allusions to his physical disabilities:*

"tamen si necesse fuerit auctorem producere, quaerito ab eo qui Drusillam euntem in caelum vidit: idem Claudium vidisse se dicet iter facientem 'non passibus aequis'." (I, 2)

"Still, if I must produce my authority, apply to the man who saw Drusilla going heavenward; he will say he saw Claudius limping along in the same direction." (A. P. Ball ed., p. 132, 1)

"nuntiatur Iovi venisse quendam bonae staturae, bene canum; nescio quid illum minari, assidue enim caput movere; pedem dextrum trahere. quaesisse se cuius nationis esset; respondisse nescio quid perturbato sono et voce confusa; non intellegere se linguam eius, nec Graecum esse nec Romanum nec ullius gentis notae." (V, 2)

"The news was brought to Jupiter that somebody had come, a rather tall man, quite gray-headed; that he was threatening something or other, for he kept shaking his head; and that he limped with his right foot. The messenger said he had asked of what nation he was, but his answer was mumbled in some kind of an incoherent noise; he didn't recognize the man's language, but he wasn't either Greek or Roman or of any known race." (A. P. Ball ed., p. 138, 5)

"tum Hercules primo aspectu sane perturbatus est, ut qui etiam non omnia monstra timuerit. ut vidit novi generis faciem, insolitum incessum, vocem nullius terrestris animalis sed qualis esse marinis beluis solet, raucam et implicatam, putavit sibi tertium decimum laborem venisse. diligentius intuenti visus est quasi homo." (V, 3)

"Herkules at the first sight was a good deal disturbed, even though he was one who didn't fear any sort of monsters. When he beheld the aspect of this unknown specimen, its extraordinary gait, its voice belonging to no earthly creature but more like that of the monsters of the deep, hoarse and articulate, he thought that a thirteenth labor had come to him. When he looked more carefully, however, it appeared to be a man." (A. P. Ball ed., p. 138f., 5)

"quid nunc profatu vocis incerto sonas? quae patria, quae gens mobile eduxit caput?" (VII, 2)

"What's that, that in a muffled voice you're trying to say? Where is the land or race to own your shaky head?" (A. P. Ball ed., p. 140, 7)

As these passages indicate, Claudius is, in fact, depicted as a fool, showing both mental and physical symptoms of idiotism. Naturally, such a monster cannot be a Roman:

"Luguduni natum est, Planci municipem vides. quod tibi narro, ad sextum decimum lapidem natus est a Vienna, Gallus germanus. itaque quod Gallum facere oportebat, Romam cepit." (VI, 1)

". . . he was born at Lugudunum; you behold one of Marcus' citizens. As I'm telling you, he was born sixteen miles from Vienna, a genuine Gaul. And so as a Gaul ought to do, he captured Rome." (A.P. Ball ed., p. 139, 6)

Now all the crimes of monstrous Claudius are listed: he is held responsible for the murder of 35 senators, 221 nobles and "ceteros *ὅσα ψάμαθός τε κόνις τε*." (XIV, 1) Seneca writes:

". . . tam facile homines occidebat, quam canis adsidit." (X, 3)

"This fellow, . . . , used to kill people as easily as a dog stops to rest." (A.P. Ball ed., p. 145, 10)

He disregarded the law:

"deflete virum, quo non alius potuit citius discere causas, una tantum parte audita, saepe et neutra." (XII, 3)

"Mourn for the man than whom no one more quickly
Was able to see the right in a lawsuit,
Only at hearing one side of the quarrel,—
Often not either." (A.P. Ball ed., p. 149, 12)

Finally, he wasted Roman citizenship on everybody:

"sed Clotho 'ego mehercules' inquit 'pusillum temporis adicere illi volebam, dum hos pauculos, qui supersunt, civitate donaret'—constituerat enim omnes Graecos, Gallos, Hispanos, Britannos togatos videre—'sed quoniam placet aliquos peregrinos in semen relinqui et tu ita iubes fieri, fiat'." (III, 3)

"But Clotho remarked, 'I swear I intended to give him a trifle more time, till he should make citizens out of the few that are left outside—for he had made up his mind to see everybody, Greeks, Gauls, Spaniards, Britons, wearing togas. However, since it is perhaps a good thing to have a few foreigners left as a nucleus, and since you wish it, it shall be attended to'." (A. P. Ball ed., p. 134f., 3)

To the picture of a complete idiot are to be added the qualities of a bloodthirsty tyrant, who murders nobles and common people, violating the law and wasting Roman citizenship on the inhabitants of the provinces. Claudius, who appears to us hardly more despicable than Agrippina, is depicted as a terrible monster, a tyrant par excellence. In this way, Seneca succeeds in transforming a murder committed for egoistic reasons into tyrannicide and thus declares it the good deed of the year. Contrasted against that gloomy background, Nero appears to better advantage. Paragraph IV, 1–2 is a shameless praise of the new emperor. He is covered with laurel beforehand and depicted as a good monarch, upholding justice. Even the gods praise him, the Fatal Sister spins an extra long thread of life for him, and the philosopher Seneca does not hesitate to praise him as a great singer. We may assume that Seneca would have risked his life, had he dared to give a true report of the circumstances. We assume, as Wasson does, that Seneca was informed about the murder of the emperor. His Apocolocyntosis was obviously intended to give him a chance to survive. Claudius is depicted as the incarnation of evil. Consequently, the murder appears to be morally justified. In this way, he subsequently provides the murderers with an altruistic motive, thus easing their conscience. Is it uncomfortable to have witnesses to a good deed? By praising the new ruler enthusiastically as the rescuer of the state and of law and order, he recommends himself as a royal propagandist, and exerts a certain moral pressure upon the young Nero. He must not disappoint the great expectations and hopes connected with his person. In this light, the Apocolocyntosis is to be considered as a psychologically clever move in order to survive in the given situation. To assume that Seneca intended to allude to the poison which killed Claudius does not fit the

obviously opportunistic intention of the text as a whole. Seneca's endeavors to avoid any personal danger would have been doomed to failure by such an allusion. (11)

There is some evidence that -colocynt- in Apocolocyntosis was not only meant to signify 'fool', but something else. M. Deltgen mentions that the term 'cucurbita' occurs towards the end of the twelfth century in the feudal law of the Langobards, where we find the expressions 'cucurbitare' and 'cucurbitatio':

> "si fidelis cucurbitaverit dominum, i.e. cum uxore ejus concubuerit . . . " (liber feudorum, I, tit. 5, 1, in Deltgen, p. 33)

'Cucurbitare' is a synonym of 'to commit adultery'. Ducange explains:

> "uxorem alterius adulterio polluere, proprie de vasallo, qui domini uxorem adulterio polluit et ejus ventrem instar cucurbitae inflat, i.e. impregnat." (In Deltgen, p. 33)

> "To dishonor a married woman by adultery. In particular, it refers to a vassal who has seduced the wife of his feudal lord and who in this way makes her abdomen swell like a pumpkin, i.e. he makes her pregnant." (Transl. Deltgen/Kauer)

Accordingly, 'cucurbitatio' indicates 'adultery', and 'cucurbita' the deceived husband who comes out of the affair as a loser, a fool.

Therefore, 'cucurbita' signifies not only 'fool', 'idiot' in general, but also a special kind of fool. Since the Langobards in many respects continued Roman tradition, we might suppose that already in Roman times this word stood for cuckold, although we cannot prove it. There are, however, some hints that -colocynt-, contained in the title of Seneca's satire, might be understood additionally in this sense, i.e. that it is possibly an allusion to the Emperor's miserable married life.

When he was still a little boy, he suffered both neglect and persecution by the women surrounding him. His grandmother Augusta, his mother Antonia, and his

sister Livilla despised him and took advantage of every chance to humiliate him. This chain of misfortune with women continued throughout his life: his first fiancée, Aemilia Lepida, was repudiated by him before marriage. The second, Livia Medullina, died of an illness on the very day of the marriage. He was divorced from his first wife, Plautia Urgulanilla, because of her immoral way of life, and because she was suspected of being involved in murder. He was divorced from his second wife, Aelia Paetina, because of constant quarrels. Messalina, his third wife, deceived him—among others—with Silius and was executed. Agrippina finally cuckolded him a second time with Pallas.

These facts remained by no means secret but were generally known. Claudius himself, on several occasions, commented on his miserable married life. With regard to Messalina, Suetonius reports:

> "Quam cum comperisset super cetera flagitia atque dedecora C. Silio etiam nupsisse dote inter auspices consignata, supplicio adfecit confirmavitque pro contione apud praetorianos, quatenus sibi matrimonia male cederent, permansurum se in caelibatu, ac nisi permansisset, non recusaturum confodi manibus ipsorum." (Suetonius, Divus Claudius, XXVI, in C. L. Roth)

> "But when he learned that besides other shameful and wicked deeds she had actually married Gaius Silius, and that a formal contract had been signed in the presence of witnesses, he put her to death and declared before the assembled praetorian guard that inasmuch as his marriages did not turn out well, he would remain a widower, and if he did not keep his word, he would not refuse death at their hands." (Suetonius, J. Gavorse ed., p. 227)

and with regard to Agrippina:

> "Sub exitu vitae signa quaedam, nec obscura, paenitentis de matrimonio Agrippinae deque Neronis adoptione dederat. Siquidem, commemorantibus libertis ac laudantibus cognitionem, qua pridie quandam adulterii ream condemnarat, sibi quoque in fatis esse iactavit omnia impudica, sed non impunita matrimonia." (Suetonius, Divis Claudius, XLIII, in C. L. Roth)

"Towards the end of his life he had shown some plain signs of repentance for his marriage with Agrippina and his adoption of Nero. For, when his freedmen expressed their approval of a trial in which he had the day before condemned a woman for adultery, he declared that it had been his destiny also to have wives who were all unchaste, but not unchastened." (Suetonius, J. Gavorse ed., p. 236)

As these two passages reveal, the emperor considered himself a deceived husband and talked about his wives' adulteries to the praetorians and his freedmen. Behind his back, however, the Emperor's cuckoldship may have been the object of general mockery, and it is therefore not astonishing that in the text of the Apocolocyntosis we find an allusion to this circumstance:

"quid in cubiculo suo faciant, nescit, et iam 'caeli scrutatur plagas'?" (VIII, 3)

"He doesn't know what goes on in his own chamber, and now 'he searches the regions of heaven'." (A. P. Ball ed., p. 142, 8)

Therefore, we hold that the -colocynt- in Apocolocyntosis signifies 'cucurbita' not, however, in the sense of a botanical species, but in the figurative sense of 'fool' or 'madman' and possibly in a limited figurative sense of 'cuckold'.

One may ask now what explanation we have to give for the diarrhoea from which the dying emperor is said to have suffered. The only evidence for this diarrhoea is the already quoted sentence from the Apocolocyntosis (IV, 3): "Vae me, puto concacavi me". It would be reckless to rank this polemic satire among the texts of serious historians. The author of this text was not interested in making true statements, but rather in mocking the Emperor Claudius as effectively as possible. Anyone doubting this should have a look at the next sentence. It reads as follows:

"quod an fecerit, nescio: omnia certe concacavit." (Ibid.)

"I do not know whether he really did this: he certainly fouled everything." (Transl. by Deltgen/Kauer)

It did not matter to Seneca whether it really happened or not. He simply did not want to omit this cynical play upon words. The assumption that the story of the diarrhoea is not a mere invention does not lead us any further, since numerous poisonings are accompanied by severe diarrhoea. In addition, the "evacuation of the bowels" mentioned by Tacitus makes it likely that Claudius was probably already suffering from diarrhoea before he was poisoned.

We do not pretend to have completely refuted Mr. Wasson's hypotheses. Our only concern has been to articulate the evidence against his conclusions. This negative argumentation must suffice, since in our view the historical sources do not at present provide convincing evidence with regard to the plants or rather the poisons by means of which Claudius was murdered. The problem must, therefore, be considered as still unsolved.


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# Notes

1. For some passages we prefer to give our own translations. Here "opimus" is definitely 'fattening', 'rich'.

2. The word "boleto" in the text of H. Fuchs shows these brackets signifying: [ ] = traces in the codex; < > = lacking in the codex. This means that exactly in this critical passage we have to rely upon a conjecture.

3. The "evacuation of the bowels" may have also been due to the Emperor's wretched health. He frequently suffered from intestinal disease and from violent stomach-aches. (cf. Suetonius)

4. The sign ** in H. Fuch's edition indicates a lacuna which could not be filled with certainty.

5. Not italicized in the Beltram edition. We have italicized this sentence quoted by R.G. Wasson as we wish to lay stress upon the fact that it is to be seen in its context.

6. The fruit pulp of *C. colocynthis* is very dry. Had Xenophon prepared a liquid from it he would at best have been able to put a few drops of it on the feather. Had he prepared a powder he would have found it difficult to put a considerable amount of it on the feather.

7. Cf. Lexikon der Alten Welt, under "Denar", column 720.

8. Cf. Schõne, p. 45f.

9. Russo writes "*ἀπαθανάτισις*" whereas in the Boissevain edition of Dio Cassius we found "*ἀθανάτισις*". However, the words are practically synonymous.

10. "Claudius's mother often called him 'a monster: a man whom Mother Nature had begun to work upon but then flung aside'; and, if she ever accused anyone of stupidity, would exclaim: 'He is a bigger fool even than my own son Claudius!'" (Suetonius, Claudius, transl. by R. Graves, p. 183)

11. The letter which Nero sent to the Senate after his mother Agrippina had been killed on his order and in which he justified this bloody murder, had been composed by Seneca. This is another example of Seneca's opportunistic attitude towards Nero. (cf. Tacitus, Ann., XIV, 10, transl. by M. Grant, p. 318)

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